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PARIS FOR ARS (DWINTON)
DEPARTMENT FOR AF/PD (ANYASO, TITUS, LISENBY), AF/W (ACOOK)
DEPARTMENT FOR USAID
DEPARTMENT PASS TO DOJ FOR ICITAP and OPDAT

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KIRC](#) [OEXC](#) [KPAO](#) [KISL](#) [SCUL](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: GPRA Report-WOMEN'S MONTH Programming

11. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: The American Cultural Center in Benin hosted the showing of the film dealing with sexual harassment entitled "Au nom de toutes les femmes" (On Behalf of All Women). In her opening remarks before the viewing, PAO Rhonda J. Watson briefed the audience about the origins of the women's month celebration and noted that the theme for International Women's Day 2009 is "Women and Men United Against Violence to Women and Girls." This USAID-funded and locally produced film was selected for viewing in order to bring attention to this issue and to sensitize the local population and to raise public awareness on sexual harassment in secondary schools and in the work place.

12. DATE OF ACTIVITY: March 5; Second quarter, FY 09.

13. PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION/OBJECTIVES: Post showed this film as part of its Women's Month programming and to raise awareness about the legal sanctions against sexual harassment, which is a serious problem in Benin.

14. MPP UMBRELLA THEMES AND AUDIENCE REACHED: Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights: The film attracted at least one hundred guests including the former President of the High Court of Justice, former Ministers, government officials, members of the diplomatic community, faculty members, High School students, NGO leaders and journalists. At least fifteen media outlets including two TV stations, two radio stations and eight print media covered this event.

15. RESULT/IMPACT: Excellent. The guests expressed their appreciation for the Cultural Center's initiative in presenting the film and voiced their interest in securing copies of the film that they could show, themselves, in other venues. In discussions after the viewing, the local Coordinator of the EMPOWER project commented that the film was produced in August 2007 and that the objective of the film is to publicize the 2006 passage of a law criminalizing sexual harassment in order to help eradicate this problem in Benin. She noted that offenders are liable to receive punishment of up to two-years in prison. According to the National Coordinator of the EMPOWER project, five female attorneys belonging to the association of the women attorneys of Benin have volunteered to assist victims of sexual harassment free of charge. In contributing to the discussions, the female Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Abomey-Calavi suggested that this film should be shown to female students on the University campus and in the other institutions of learning. The viewers seized the opportunity to renew their commitment to fighting sexual harassment. The PAO agreed to secure additional copies of the DVD to make available to interested NGOs.

16. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING/IN KIND SUPPORT: None.

17. QUALITY OF USG SUPPORT: Excellent. Kudos to the Women's Justice and Empowerment Initiative representative, Dennis Pierce, who attended the showing and explained the efforts that the USG is making to train Beninese police in how to investigate these crimes as well as efforts to improve the legal system to address problems

associated with prosecutions for sexual harassment and violence against women. Pierce also explained that the U.S. government, through USAID, is funding and providing oversight of the EMPOWER program, which is sensitizing the population to the issue of violence against women as well as providing services to victims of gender-based violence.

Brown